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Fulbright Talk Reflects Disquiet

*Speech Strips Away Myths, Seeks
Realistic Approach to Foreign Policy*

Senator Fulbright's speech reflects the disquiet among those inside and outside the Government who are trying to shape or influence American foreign policy. They are trying to find and rationalize some new and calmer line of policy in a very confused and contradictory situation.

What confounds them is that a strong case can be made that in international affairs we have lost ground since 1960: The Berlin Wall, the Russian base in Cuba, the trouble with France, the trouble in Panama, the setback in Viet Nam and the weakening world influence of America's voice.

But there is a brighter side. In a degree, Russian attitudes have softened but for how long no one knows. But we do not feel, and the world does not feel, that we stand any longer on the brink of the precipice. And, in any case, we are not worried about our strength compared to the Russians; we are far more confident and composed. Splits in the Communist world have become more apparent and more significant. A more stable condition, even though with its seamy side, seems to exist.

What has been described above represents opposing views on the present American position. Those who think, write, speak and act are trying to sort out the conflicts and find a new policy. Senator Fulbright's contribution has been to strip away some myths and delusions about our position so that there can be a more realistic discussion of what we are to do about it—though the Senator does not

offer much of a positive nature.

But he has, as a leading Democrat and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, recognized, in effect, certain facts: The net of it in Cuba is that we blundered and have found no practical way to correct our errors; we have fumbled in Panama and probably will have to move soon to change conditions for operation and control of the Panama Canal; sooner than we expect or hope, we have to adjust to the rising position of Red China.

It is very easy to write this off as appeasement, and indeed there is an element of appeasement involved. But it must be recognized at the same time that Senator Fulbright is doing no more than defining conditions which well informed people know to exist. We are moving in some of the directions he indicates.

But there is no sign that the general attitude expressed by Senator Fulbright is going to prevail. Quite to the contrary, President Johnson has now committed himself to victory in Viet Nam, a long, hard and expensive process which may yet directly involve major American military forces if it is to be successful. No neutralization. No appeasement. In fact, the fight is placed in a broader frame as a critical test case of Red China's new strategy to dominate all Southeast Asia.

The Cuban matter still rangles deeply. However disappointing the attempts to cope with it, however little our allies will cooperate, and however illogical our position may seem to them or to Senator Fulbright and George

Kennan, it will be hard to divert for long any President from trying to find a way to get rid of Premier Castro.

Nor will any President, drawing on the lessons of history, be likely to find any comfort in temporary Russian reasonableness, nor in appeasement as a safe policy.

These factors cannot be classified by Senator Fulbright as myths. What should be better understood is that Senator Fulbright is not criticizing Mr. Johnson's policy, he is aiming at a continuum of policy through five Presidents on the premise that a new condition in the world has suddenly been discovered.

But when faced, as President Kennedy was and President Johnson is, with what are called options in today's foreign policy lingo, it is a different matter, as so many Presidents have found once they got into the White House. Whether Republican or Democratic, the choice they usually make is to try, by whatever action or attitude seems best in the circumstances, to stop the outward thrust of communism—with the recognition that this may mean we will be forced into war.

The rest can be left for learned discussions on the Senate floor and articles in Foreign Affairs Quarterly, all of which serves a useful and interesting purpose. Meantime, it does not seem likely that the Johnson administration will be diverted by the new semantics from the major premise of American foreign policy for the past 20 years, direct and indirect opposition to the expansion of world-wide communism.